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THE CARY HOMESTEAD

Where Alice and Phœbe Cary lived and worked for nearly twenty years.

The CARY SISTERS

BY

JENNIE M. DAY

TOLEDO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHICAGO

A. FLANAGAN COMPANY

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The sketch contained in the following pages is founded on "A Memorial of Alice and Phœbe Cary," by Mary Clemmer Ames, and on a visit to Clovernook, which included an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Warren S. Cary. Mr. Cary is the only living member of the immediate family of which Alice and Phœbe Cary formed a part.

ALICE CARY

PHŒBE CARY

The Cary Sisters

CHAPTER I

April 26, 1832

FOR days April had been living up to her reputation. The little brown house and all that surrounded it—the sweetbrier clinging to its walls, the apple and cherry trees, the rose bushes, the grass plot in front and the fields beyond—were thoroughly drenched.

Even Robert Cary seemed to be affected by the general despondency of the outside world, as he stood at the window and with an apparent effort at resignation repeated in a low tone:

"'The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto the land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand.' 'He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'"

Then his voice suddenly changed and the ring of rejoicing was unmistakable, as the sun burst from behind a cloud and flooded the room with its yellow light:

"'Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.'"

The radiance from without was reflected in the faces of those within as they gathered around the breakfast table: five handsome brown-eyed girls, two boys with eyes which were mates to their sisters', and one tiny golden-haired miss who shared with her mother the distinction of possessing the only blue eyes in the family.

Rowena, Susan, Rhoda, Alice, Asa, Phœbe, Warren and Lucy were the names of the children in this happy circle. They waited at the table for the mother, who was hushing a baby's cries in an adjoining chamber. When she returned, her bright face added another gleam of sunshine to the already brilliant room, and a general air of contentment pervaded the group.

"Well, Alice," said the grave father, turning to the daughter who most resembled him, "we are doubly glad for the sunshine, since it comes in time to help us celebrate the day you first appeared among us." Then turning to his wife, "Have you thought, Elizabeth, that today is the twenty-sixth of April?"

Had she thought? O man of excellent traits, where are your eyes? Do you not see the little bouquet of wild violets at Alice's place? And what is this she finds as she lifts her plate?—a new linen handkerchief hemmed with such neatness that only mother's fingers could have

done it. The mystery remains unexplained how, with the manifold cares of a household of eleven, Mrs. Cary could yet find time to do the things that absolute necessity did not require.

When breakfast was over the children went to the windows and looked out on the water-soaked world. Swallows flitting around the eaves and bluebirds balancing themselves on the branches of trees exchanged the season's greetings. From the tips of the leaves hung tiny globes of rainbow tints that tumbled off into space and were instantly succeeded by their counterparts, keeping up a gay chase which caused Alice to exclaim: "April is smiling through her tears!" Then, leaning out of the window and taking in the sky country with her open-eyed, earnest gaze, she cried: "Oh, look, everybody, and see the rosy cloud hedges between us and heaven!"

Soon a little group started down the road with dinner baskets and books—Rhoda and Alice arm in arm, Warren and Phœbe close behind, and Asa following quietly in the rear, looking lovingly back at little Lucy, who stood in the doorway watching with wistful eyes until the last sign of her playmates disappeared.

In the ditches beside the road ran muddy rivers which splashed and rippled and tried to reach over their borders "with dimpled hands," as Alice said.

When, late that afternoon, the door of the little brick schoolhouse swung open and the children bounded forth, there were at least five young hearts beating high with joy and pride; for had not Rhoda been commended for her reading, Alice for her studiousness, Asa for his skill in figures, Phœbe for her neat copybook, and Warren for the way in which he had repeated his letters, even "skipping around"?

It was Asa and Warren and Phœbe who led the way this time. Asa felt that in spite of the praise of his teacher his happiness would not be complete until he had heard his mother's "Well done, my son," and Phœbe and Warren were eager for a romp with wee Lucy, who always welcomed them so joyously.

The two older sisters lingered behind, while Alice said coaxingly: "Now, Rhoda, tell me about the prince. You said they put him in that dreadful dungeon. Oh, surely they let him out!"

"Don't ask me to end my story before I have well begun," laughed Rhoda. "Just wait until we get to the big oak, where we can have a dry log to sit on, and I will try to call up the story fairies." Then she stopped, and looked admiringly at her younger sister. "And you are twelve years old today, Alice! Soon you will be weaving stories of your own."

Alice walked on with the dignity she felt becoming in one of her years, but haughtiness came near meeting its proverbial fate, for she stumbled and would have fallen but for Rhoda's rescuing arm. Stopping to see what it was she had tripped on, she picked up a freshly cut switch.

"Look, Rhoda," she cried, "why shouldn't this make a tree? The earth is still damp. Let us stick it in the ground and see if it will grow," and, suiting the action to the word, she quickly dug a small hole and firmly planted the branch.

"Now we must watch it and see that it is not disturbed," she said.*

This little incident helped to shorten the distance to the old oak under the friendly branches of which so many happy hours were spent. Here Rhoda related thrilling tales in so realistic a manner that Alice was held spellbound and often moved to tears. To her Rhoda was more wonderful than the genii in the "Arabian Nights," for at her bidding did not the most interesting people spring into life and experience marvelous adventures?

On this afternoon they sat long, Rhoda looking off into space, where she seemed to see and hear the people of her creation and forget even Alice, who watched her with dilated eyes and

* The tree, a stately sycamore, is still standing.

bated breath, as motionless as a statue, apparently afraid that a movement might break the charm and bring to despair the brave lords and ladies whose fate was hanging in the balance.

The climax had just been reached, Rhoda had stopped speaking and Alice was drawing a deep breath of satisfaction, when they were brought back to real life by the voices of the younger children calling them to supper. So the land of fancy was regretfully left behind; but they knew the way back, and many and frequent were the visits they made to this enchanted region.

After the frugal meal Rhoda and Alice took their accustomed places at the dishpan and swiftly brought order out of chaos, changing soiled dishes into bright, shining ones.

Then came the quiet hour before going to rest. The little circle, bound together with bands of affection and interest, sat in the gathering dusk and early candlelight and talked over the events of the day. Each one, except Baby Elmina, shared in the duties and responsibilities of the household, even to three-year-old Lucy, who threw corn to the hungry chickens, amused the baby for hours at a time, and often acted as messenger between father in the field and mother in the house.

Alice sat at the window, between the sisters who were the favorites of her childhood. Lucy

was at her feet, the golden head lying in her lap, while Rhoda's hand rested caressingly on her shoulder.

"Where do the shadows come from?" she mused. "Do they rise or fall? They go upward and light the candles of the skies, and yet they gather thicker and thicker on the bosom of the earth."

She looked out at the long, straight rows of currant bushes, alternating with spaces where early vegetables had been sown, in the near-by garden, stretching away into the gathering darkness. She thought of the long years before her, reaching on and on into the mysterious future. What did they hold for her? How far could she control her destiny?

"I will learn a lesson from the person who planted the potatoes and the beans," she said, almost aloud. "When I am old enough to be sure of myself, I will try to plan my life like those straight rows. The stones and sticks and weeds I will carry away; they shall not harm my garden nor make my row crooked. And if storms come and the whole world is dark, I will remember how, this morning, when we thought the sun had quite forsaken us, he came from his hiding-place and shone again so warmly and steadily that we almost forgot he had ever left us."

Before she closed her eyes that night she sent up a little prayer that the lessons of this day might never grow dim in her memory.

Below is one of Alice Cary's descriptions of her home and mother:

AN ORDER FOR A PICTURE

O, good painter, tell me true,
  Has your hand the cunning to draw
  Shapes of things that you never saw?
Ay? Well, here is an order for you.

Woods and cornfields a little brown,—
  The picture must not be over-bright,—
  Yet all in the golden and gracious light
Of a cloud, when the summer sun is down.
  Alway and alway, night and morn,
  Woods upon woods, with fields of corn
    Lying between them, not quite sere,
And not in the full, thick, leafy bloom,
When the wind can hardly find breathing-room
    Under their tassels;—cattle near,
Biting shorter the short green grass;
And a hedge of sumach and sassafras,
With bluebirds twittering all around,—
(Ah, good painter, you can't paint sound!)—
  These, and the house where I was born,
Low and little, and black and old,
With children, many as it can hold,
All at the windows, open wide,—
Heads and shoulders clear outside,
And fair young faces all ablush:
  Perhaps you may have seen, some day,
  Roses crowding the selfsame way,
Out of a wilding, wayside bush.

Listen closer. When you have done
With woods and cornfields and grazing herds,
A lady, the loveliest ever the sun
Looked down upon, you must paint for me;
Oh, if I only could make you see
The clear blue eyes, the tender smile,
The sovereign sweetness, the gentle grace,
The woman's soul, and the angel's face,
That are beaming on me all the while,
I need not speak these foolish words:
Yet one word tells you all I would say,—
She is my mother: you will agree
That all the rest may be thrown away.

CHAPTER II

September 4, 1832

SUMMER was smilingly putting on her necklace of carnelians and rubies and gold, not knowing that it would turn to rusty iron and tighten until her breath was gone and she was only a thing of the past. The apple orchard at Clovernook Farm was generous in its contribution to the rich autumn coloring. The trees were laden with fruit in all stages of maturity, the early harvest trees glorying over their neighbors, and blushing with pride as they displayed the completion of their summer's work.

A small boy was stealing along among the trees, his eyes shining with excitement, and an expectant smile on his lips. Presently, glancing upward, he discovered the object of his search, looking like a personified red astrakhan among her mates.

"Wait, Phœbe," called Warren, as the bright-eyed little maid jumped from the lowest branch of the apple tree, her apron filled with the rosy fruit.

"Well?" said Phœbe, pausing and turning her head slightly.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and one to grow on!" cried Warren, accompanying each count with a blow which brought the color to her cheeks and left her nearly breathless.

"Oh, you rogue!" laughed Phœbe, picking up the scattered fruit and shaking back her disordered hair, as Warren sought safety in flight after triumphantly reaching the end in spite of her struggles and cries. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," she panted, beginning to hurl the contents of her apron after him, checking his retreat and finally bringing him low.

Washington was not more generous to Cornwallis than was this victor to her fallen foe, as she helped him up, and, still choking with laughter, made sure that he was not hurt. He, in his turn, helped to gather again the somewhat bruised apples, and gallantly carried one corner of the apron basket.

They found themselves in as queer a procession as ever started out on parade. Asa displayed the banners in the form of a mopstick on one shoulder and a broom on the other. Lucy came next, under either arm a struggling kitten that furnished music for the occasion; then Rhoda and Alice with a small stand on which lay the seven books composing the family library, and last the nearly grown sisters, each with a kitchen chair.

It was a merry party, for today marked an era in their lives. They were moving from the old house to the new—the long expected, planned for and worked for event. Deep in the hearts of some of them there was a reluctance to leave the small weatherstained dwelling which was the only home they had ever known, but each guarded his secret carefully, and so no shadow fell on the little company.

Before the day was over the last article had found its place in the new house, and a tired but cheerful group gathered about the supper table.

"I think you will long remember your eighth birthday, Phœbe," said Mrs. Cary, looking across the table at the little girl, who returned her affectionate glance with a loving smile.

"Mother," she said slowly, "I am glad and proud to live in this house. I don't want to go back to the other, but," with a little quaver in her voice, "I love the old house and I wish I could feel quite sure that it isn't lonesome for us tonight. It looks so empty and sad, and seems to be saying, 'Come back, come back, come back!' "

No one laughed at Phœbe's fancy, and even mischievous Warren's eyes grew big and solemn as he looked at his sister in silence.

"I love the old home better than I ever shall any other," said Alice, almost passionately. "I

love every shingle in the old roof, the patter of the rain close over our heads, the smell of the sweetbrier under the window, and the lullaby of the branches when the wind blows."

"It is quite right, my children," said Mr. Cary, nodding his head approvingly, "when we are forming new friends, to remember services rendered us by old ones, and I am sure none of us can ever forget how faithfully and well the old house has sheltered us all these years. But I am just as sure, if it could think and speak as we do, it would be saying tonight: 'Good-by, my children; God bless you in the new home. I shall miss you, but I shall be glad to rest, for I am tired.'"

Mrs. Cary gave her husband a grateful glance. The momentary sadness was dispelled, and the hungry group applied themselves to the wholesome fare before them.

"Don't get lost in this great mansion," called Rhoda, as the younger children started for bed that night.

"No, we won't," retorted Phœbe, "unless you want to show your skill in finding us."

Asa, who was becoming very gallant, opened the door for his sisters to pass through, and stood silently in the shadow, tall and erect.

"What is that in the dark corner," said Alice, "a person or a post?"

"There," cried Phœbe, "she called you a post! Why don't you rail at her?"

So the busy day, filled to overflowing with so great a variety of emotions, ended with laughter —that health-bringing, care-dispelling, excellent gift to man.

Below is Phœbe Cary's description of the old home.

OUR HOMESTEAD

Our old brown homestead reared its walls
From the wayside dust aloof,
Where the apple-boughs could almost cast
Their fruit upon its roof;
And the cherry-tree so near it grew
That when awake I've lain
In the lonesome nights, I've heard the limbs
As they creaked against the pane;
And those orchard trees, oh, those orchard trees!
I've seen my little brothers rocked
In their tops by the summer breeze.

The sweetbrier, under the window-sill,
Which the early birds made glad,
And the damask rose, by the garden fence,
Were all the flowers we had.
I've looked at many a flower since then,
Exotics rich and rare,
That to other eyes were lovelier
But not to me so fair;
For those roses bright, oh, those roses bright!
I have twined them in my sister's locks,
That are hid in the dust from sight.

We had a well, a deep old well,
Where the spring was never dry,

And the cool drops down from the mossy stones
  Were falling constantly,
And there never was water half so sweet
  As the draught which filled my cup,
Drawn up to the curb by the rude old sweep
  That my father's hand set up.
And that deep old well, oh, that deep old well!
  I remember now the plashing sound
Of the bucket as it fell.

Our homestead had an ample hearth,
  Where at night we loved to meet;
There my mother's voice was always kind,
  And her smile was always sweet;
And there I've sat on my father's knee,
  And watched his thoughtful brow,
With my childish hand in his raven hair,—
  That hair is silver now!
But that broad hearth's light, oh, that broad hearth's light!
  And my father's look, and my mother's smile,
They are in my heart tonight!

CHAPTER III

1833-1835

THERE passed away a little more than a year of work and play, laughter and tears, sunshine and shadow, with the work, laughter and sunshine enveloping their mates so completely that they nearly absorbed them, and then the Cary family were plunged into deep sorrow. Rhoda, who was perhaps the most gifted one of the family, was taken away, and only one short month later little Lucy, the household pet, followed her.

Alice and Phœbe, of whom we know most, never recovered from the blow. The loss of these sisters was one of the deepest shadows they carried with them all through their earnest, useful lives. For a few months longer they were encouraged and helped by the wise counsel and tender affection of the mother who was the wonder of their childhood. They were convinced that in all the world there was not to be found a woman so beautiful, so wise and so pure; nor could they imagine any other person accomplishing so much. To grow up to be like mother—this was their earliest ambition, their most passionate desire.

SYCAMORE TREE PLANTED BY ALICE CARY

In the summer of 1835, after less than three years' enjoyment of the new home which had cost such privation and labor, Mrs. Cary folded her weary hands and closed her eyes for her last sleep, leaving a circle of which she had been the center and inspiration. Can we wonder that the old question—asked when the world was young and still unanswered—should have troubled those bereaved young people? *Why?*

But there was no time for idle repining. A blessing came to them in the necessity for active employment. Hearts may ache and the world seem very dark, but the world's work must go on, and it is the world's workers who know best how to bear their sorrows. The machinery of the household moved on much as it had when the circle was complete, and smiles were not lacking, even though at first they were forced into existence.

This pushing aside of one's pain that the sufferings of others may be more easily borne is the dear price which people of character pay for the growth of the qualities which we so much admire. There is a high purpose in the hard things of life, and it is for us to decide whether or not this purpose shall be accomplished in us. It was accomplished in the members of the Cary family; of this we have abundant proof.

One day's routine followed another in quick

succession; days passed into weeks and weeks into months, until two whole years had elapsed since the bitter parting from wife and mother. The two older daughters were married; Warren and Elmina were living in Cincinnati with Rowena, and there were left in the old home with Mr. Cary only Alice, Asa and Phœbe.

It had been a busy day. Asa had been hard at work on the farm. Phœbe, with a book in one hand and a churn-dasher in the other, had been urging the latter up and down with an irregularity for which the absorbing interest of the book was responsible. The fact that the bringing of the butter was perhaps needlessly delayed did not prevent the double worker from becoming weary; nor did it lessen the feeling of satisfaction with which she viewed the result of her labors. Alice had been plying broom and dustpan with great vigor, while the maid in the kitchen had been making good things soon to be enjoyed to the utmost.

Mr. Cary, who usually led in the activities of the household, was absent today. He had left home early in the morning, and Alice's heart had been full of foreboding during the day, for she remembered the somewhat confused manner in which he had stated his business, and had a haunting feeling that something had been withheld. When he drove up at dusk he found

a tired group awaiting him on the pleasant south veranda.

"Here you all are," he said, in his affectionate manner; but Alice was sure she detected an undercurrent of excitement in his voice. He threw himself into the easy chair which seemed to be inviting him, and after looking around at the silent group he went on in a low tone: "I have something of importance to say to you. Will you hear it tonight, or are you too tired to listen?"

All eyes were turned to him inquiringly. Alice seated herself at his side and took his hand lovingly between hers.

"Let us know now, father," she whispered. "I cannot wait."

In the short silence which followed she promised herself that no matter what her father might have to say it should not be made harder for him through any act of hers. Presently Mr. Cary spoke again. His voice was grave and earnest.

"I hope that the change I am about to make in our family will be agreeable to my children. I loved your mother truly and faithfully; I still love her. Nevertheless, a new interest has come into my life. I feel, too, that my children should no longer be deprived of the guidance and help which only a mother can give. In a

very short time I shall have a new wife and you a new mother. Can you promise me you will make her welcome?"

Just a minute in which to still her heart throbs, and then Alice rose, kissed him, and said in a voice which was not quite steady:

"You may depend upon me, father."

Asa shook his parent's hand and walked away in silence; but Phœbe had disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

1835-1837

THE announcement which Robert Cary made to his children that night was perhaps the greatest shock to Phœbe. A young girl of thirteen could scarcely be expected easily to resign herself to the thought that another—a stranger—was to take her mother's place and expect from her the affection of a daughter. She kept to her room for a day, refusing to see or speak with anyone, but when she appeared the following morning there was a new look in her face: the battle with self had been fought and won.

Most loyally did Alice, Asa and Phœbe Cary prepare for the reception of their new mother. The house was made as attractive as possible to receive her. Mr. Cary had bought a new covered buggy, and behind the horses which Asa had curried and brushed until they shone, the new mistress of Clovernook Farm was driven to the door. She greeted the waiting young people pleasantly, kissed them lightly on their foreheads, then, turning to Alice, said inquiringly: "My room?" and was accordingly shown into what had been their mother's apartment.

Let us pass quickly over the first few months of this new life. The second Mrs. Cary was as

unlike the first in most respects as could be imagined. She was frugal and industrious, keeping up the ceaseless battle against dirt for which her ancestors, the Hollanders, have always been noted, but in this respect only was there an exaggerated resemblance to the first wife. She could not appreciate the finer natures of her stepchildren, and was so absorbed in looking after household affairs, seeing that the brass candlesticks and andirons were sufficiently bright, and that not a speck of dust remained on an article of furniture, that she had no time or inclination to give to the lonely girls the sympathy and affection which they so much needed. When this became apparent to them they gave up trying to win her love, but continued to do cheerfully all she required of them.

Their visits to the three graves which seemed to hold so large a share of their life's treasures became more frequent. When their daily tasks were completed their feet often turned toward the spot which seemed to bring them nearest to the absent ones. Here they confided to one another their troubles, and here, too, confessed their hunger for knowledge, and their craving to be and do something in the world.

Alice's budding literary aspirations had shown themselves in a very natural and childlike manner. Her first efforts were spent in attempts to

improve the poetry of her school reader and in occasionally covering a page of her copy-book with original verses. She now began to write snatches of the melodies which were singing in her heart.

When Phœbe was fourteen she one day asked permission to go for a walk. She assumed a very unconscious air as she sauntered along, until at a safe distance from the house. Then she sat down on a log and drew from her pocket an envelope which she handled almost caressingly, looking at it this way and that, her color coming and going as she did so. This little scene was enacted again and again before the post-office was reached, and when at last the time came to part with the precious document she gave a little gasp that caused a man standing near to step forward and ask: "Is anything wrong, miss?"

Then came days and days of waiting, which finally lengthened into weeks, while Phœbe kept her secret to herself and tried not to feel disappointed.

One Saturday night it seemed particularly hard. Her brother had been to Mount Pleasant and returned with no mail for her. She had not asked, because there was no apparent reason for her doing so, but she had watched with keen eyes, and there was nothing—nothing for her.

She was sitting dejectedly before the fire when

her father looked up from the paper he was reading and said in a voice which showed some emotion: "Phœbe, come here."

She rose slowly and moved somewhat hesitatingly toward him.

"There is something in the paper I want you to see," continued he.

She reached his side and looked where he pointed. It was a poem—the lines were familiar—what! Her poem with her name printed in *The Cincinnati Enquirer?* How strange it looked—"Phœbe Cary"!

The room seemed to swim around for a moment, and then, throwing herself into her father's arms, she burst into tears. A little later she was laughing, and then, exercising all her self-control, she sat quietly while the paper was handed from one to another, her shining eyes and a new poise of the head alone betokening her triumph. What did it matter that she must wear plain clothes and do disagreeable tasks? She had written a poem that was printed in a newspaper, and she no longer cared about the petty trials of everyday life. Moreover, there were years ahead in which to write and publish, and the future looked brighter than it had since the dear sisters and mother went away. So it was in earnest endeavor that she found her greatest comfort and inspiration.

CHAPTER V

1838

FOR a few weeks past Alice had taken a great interest in going after the mail, sometimes making use of the horses; more often going on foot. She said that she liked the exercise, and that the change of scene rested her. So it was no surprise to any member of the family to see her start off on this particular autumn day, although her household duties had been heavy; nor did her brisk return cause any remark. With the quick intuition of intimacy, however, Phœbe noticed her heightened color, and felt that some revelation was coming, but the same intuition kept her silent until Alice should be ready to speak.

After the mail had been delivered, read and commented upon, Mr. Cary looked over the reading matter on the table searchingly, saying as he did so:

"I have not seen *The Sentinel.* Did you bring it, Alice?"

"Yes, I did," she answered with glowing cheeks, "but I believe I took it upstairs with my hat. I will bring it down."

As she reëntered the room she remarked:

"By the way, father, I sat down on a log to read some parts of the paper and noticed some lines in 'The Poet's Corner' which I wish to read to you. I am curious to know what you will think of them. May I read them aloud, and will everybody listen?"

This was an unusual request, and commanded immediate attention. Phœbe and Asa looked up from their checker-board and leaned back in their chairs. Mr. Cary crossed his legs and took off his spectacles. Mrs. Cary made no sign, except that her knitting needles clicked a little faster and seemed to engross her mind more than ever.

There was a slight tremor in Alice's voice, but she read the verses through with a feeling and expression which confirmed Phœbe's suspicions, and might have awakened similar ones in other minds. She kept her eyes on the paper after she had stopped reading, waited a moment, and then, looking up with an apparent effort, said:

"Well, father?"

"Oh, you want my opinion, do you?" he asked slowly. "Are you sure it is worth while?"

Then, seeing the tears trembling on Alice's eyelashes, he picked up the paper and silently read the poem again.

"There is some literary merit in it," he said finally, "but it is undoubtedly the work of a

young and inexperienced writer. 'The Child of Sorrow'—the author has suffered, but she has much to learn. The earnestness of the underlying thought is its only real virtue. Is that what you wanted me to say?" he asked, looking up innocently.

Phœbe's face was crimson. She could no longer keep silent, and flew across the floor, threw her arms around her sister's neck and kissed her, whispering: "Don't mind, Alice, it is fine; and I am so glad they printed it."

"Eh? What is this?" said Mr. Cary, looking over the top of his paper. "What does this mean, Phœbe?"

"It means," was the answer, "that Alice wrote that poem. Look in 'The Poet's Corner' and see if her name is not there."

"Well, well!" were the words which accompanied his look of amazement, upon finding that what Phœbe had said was true. Then he rose, and, patting Alice gently on the shoulder, said: "Well done. If my criticism was not high praise, it was at least honestly made, and that is what you wanted. This is good. You will do better next time."

Asa's pride in his sister was apparent in his quiet gaze, but Mrs. Cary sat silent, and Alice saw disapproval in the firmly compressed lips. Is it strange that the forlornness she had felt

when she first knew of this addition to their family again took possession of her? How different it would have been had her mother lived! How she yearned for the sympathy and counsel of that dear mother!

But her father approved, and she would go on, and, as he said, do better. This was the greatest pleasure life afforded, and it could not be wrong. She would not shirk the household tasks; she would be obedient and respectful, but her idle moments were her own to do with as she chose, and her earnest choice—nay, her passion—was for literature. So the resolve was made, and it was none the less determined because it was silent.

CHAPTER VI

1839-1850

IT was Saturday afternoon. The last touch had been given to the furniture, everything was in perfect order, and shining from recent brisk polishing. Mrs. Cary herself could think of nothing further to be done. Alice and Phœbe found their way to a clump of trees which hid them from the house and from the view of passers-by. With a sigh of satisfaction Phœbe threw herself on the ground.

"Oh, this is sweet," she cried. "A whole afternoon by ourselves!" and she stretched herself at full length on the grass, looking up at the friendly birds in the boughs above her, and at the patches of sky which could be seen through the fluttering leaves.

Alice's only reply was a quiet smile, as she drew out her pencil and paper and began to write.

"What, at it already?" said Phœbe.

"Yes," answered Alice. "These are some verses which came to me this morning while I was paring apples."

The younger sister said no more, but went off in a day dream, coming back to a realizing sense

of her surroundings as Alice dropped her pencil and held up the written sheets.

"Let me hear it," said Phœbe, and Alice complied, reading with great earnestness and expression, as was her wont.

"Send it to *The Star*," said the admiring auditor. "That is the very best you have done. I think they ought to pay you for it."

"Patience," answered the older sister. "The first thing for us to do is to make our work worth while—to think of the people who need help, who may be helped by the right word. When the money comes, let it be unexpected."

"That is all very well, and I agree with you," answered Phœbe, "but just imagine having money of our own! The curtain rises—enter candles for night work and exit in confusion the saucer of lard with the rag wick; and possibly—who knows?—exit also the disapproval of the cruel stepmother! She would not object to candles, surely, if we bought them with the money we had earned."

"Hush," said Alice, shaking her finger disapprovingly. Occasions were rare when either of the motherless girls acknowledged in words the shadow which was daily cast on their lives.

But time was too precious to be spent in conversation, and scarcely a word further was exchanged during the afternoon. When the

time came for returning to the house, Phœbe took charge of the manuscripts, feeling intuitively that it would be best to keep them out of danger. Mrs. Cary was at the door as they approached and greeted them with a frigid silence for which there was only one interpretation.

There came a day when the silent friction between stepmother and daughters reached an issue. She regarded all time spent in study and writing as worse than wasted, for if they rested after the work was done could they not begin the next morning with greater vigor? So when Phœbe was discovered under the cherry tree jotting down lines of poetry, while her half-filled pail dangled from one of the branches, she was peremptorily ordered to put the paper in the stove and then return to her work.

With burning cheeks, the young girl entered the house, but instead of doing as she had been bidden, she crept into the hall and secreted the manuscript in a dark corner of the closet under the stairway, where there were others to keep it company. She came back and, without saying a word, finished picking the cherries.

Mr. Cary would never have known of this incident from his daughters, but he chanced to be within hearing when it occurred, and for the first time realized that the relations of his

THE BIG OAK TREE

In the shade of which the Cary children spent many happy hours, and where Rhoda told her stories.

household were somewhat strained. A man of gentle nature who has lived in peace for half a century is not likely to be the first to discover discordant elements in his home circle, but the discovery once made, he is not slow to apply the remedy. So it was that Mr. Cary built a house for his wife on another part of the farm and left his children in possession of the homestead. The opportunities for carrying on their literary labors were thus multiplied tenfold, and our young songbirds were quick to take advantage of the situation.

Gradually their names became familiar to the outside world and their list of publishers lengthened. The daily and weekly journals of Cincinnati, *The Ladies' Repository*, and *Graham's Magazine* were among the first to recognize the merit of their work. Then their verses appeared in *The National Era*—published in Washington by Dr. Bailey—to which Alice became a regular contributor.

Meanwhile, they were encouraged and strengthened by appreciative letters from many eminent people, among others the poet John G. Whittier. They learned that Edgar Allan Poe had pronounced Alice's "Pictures of Memory" one of the most musically perfect lyrics in the English language. Horace Greeley one day found his way to their door, and brought with

him so vivid a description of New York life that it made a lasting impression upon them.

There was great rejoicing when, in 1847, after nine years' continuous labor, the first money was received—ten dollars from Dr. Bailey of *The Era*. Surely, no such sum ever before looked so large after having been so richly earned.

During the next three years regular contributions were made to different periodicals, and money recognition became the rule rather than the exception. This enabled the sisters to add to their stock of books and magazines and so increase their knowledge and broaden their view.

Among their most appreciative readers was Dr. Rufus W. Griswold, who, in 1850, gathered together the result of their twelve years of privation and labor, and found publishers who were willing to pay them one hundred dollars for the collection.

Their reward had been well earned. We cannot begin to estimate the obstacles overcome, nor the patient, earnest effort of those twelve years. In the Cary sisters we have an example of persistence and industry which is indeed worthy of emulation.

CHAPTER VII

1850-1871

WHEN Alice Cary was thirty years old and Phœbe was twenty-six they left their little cottage on the farm and started for a visit in the East—the land of culture and refinement for which they had yearned so many years. They went to New York and Boston, where they saw for the first time many friends whose acquaintance they had made through correspondence. The words of praise and appreciation of these admiring friends must have been very sweet to the two gifted women who had so long labored in poverty and loneliness. From Boston their hearts turned instinctively to Amesbury, where lived the poet Whittier. Mr. Whittier's poem "The Singer" gives a loving description of this visit.

About a year from the time of their eastern trip, Alice and Phœbe, accompanied by their youngest sister, Elmina, took final leave of Clovernook—the farm cottage and familiar surroundings endeared to them by memory and long association, and made a home for themselves in New York city.

They lived at first in a few small rooms, but

later were able to buy and furnish a pretty little house in which they spent the remainder of their lives. Their father made them long visits, and his gray hair and kind face were familiar in their home.

On one evening of each week the doors were thrown open for all who cared to come, and their modest house became a center of culture and refinement. "Actors, artists, poets, clergymen, titled people from abroad, women of fashion, women of letters, women of home, the known and the unknown," attractive and unattractive—all were welcome. Among the names of the most constant visitors were the familiar ones of Horace Greeley, Phineas T. Barnum, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna Dickinson and Bayard Taylor.

As the years went on, Alice and Phœbe became more and more to each other, and after Elmina's death these two were inseparable. No offer of marriage would tempt either to leave the other; their sisterly devotion never faltered nor failed.

One pleasant morning in the summer of 1869 the tinkle of the breakfast bell brought together three interesting women, the Cary sisters and Mary Clemmer Ames, who was unconsciously gathering material for her memorial of these two dear friends. They made a pretty picture:

Alice in her white gown and cap, brightened with pink ribbons; Phoebe in street dress, just from the market, bringing the freshness of the morning with her, and their visitor, in cool green, looking the embodiment of affectionate content.

"What did you see this morning?" asked Alice of Phœbe, adjusting her handsome breakfast shawl.

"I saw," answered Phoebe with assumed solemnity, "an illustration of the saying that opposites should wed. There was at the market a very large woman accompanied by a very slender man, who must have found her size and the length of his arms serious obstacles in the way of lovemaking after the approved fashion. Nevertheless, it was apparent from their affectionate manner of holding each other's hands that they had loved through thick and thin!"

When the merriment subsided her friend remarked: "It may be a kind act on your part to mention these persons to Mr. Barnum the next time he calls."

"I shall do him no such good turn," said Phœbe. "I have not forgotten the last time I visited the museum. Why, think of it! I asked to see the 'Infernal Regions,' and after investigating and finding they were out of order, he said, in such a saucy way: 'They have vanished, but

never mind, Phœbe, you'll see them in time.' 'No, in eternity,' I answered, accepting the situation as gracefully as I could."

"Phœbe and Mr. Barnum have much good-natured warfare, Mary," laughed Alice. "He appreciates her fun as thoroughly as anyone I know of. A short time since he told me about another visit at the museum. He said that he had preceded her and had passed down some steps. While intently watching a big anaconda in a cage at the top of the stairs, she walked off and fell. He caught her in his arms and saved her a severe bruising. 'I am more lucky than that first woman was who fell through the influence of the serpent,' she said as she recovered herself."

"Very good," laughed Mary. "But I am astonished, Phœbe, to hear you could so easily be charmed by a serpent, when the more fascinating animal, man, has influenced you so little."

"It is quite as well," flashed Phœbe. "I have never been disappointed in my affections, while a great many of my married friends have."

"Come, come," said Alice with mock seriousness, "more attention to the matter in hand and less to levity. May I serve you with another cup of coffee, Mary?"

A little later came the opening of the mail

and the tide of conversation ebbed and flowed with the emotions awakened by the morning's tidings. There were quick words of indignation at injustice and wrong, exclamations of joy at the triumph of right, and expressions of natural womanly interest in events affecting their friends.

It was nearly two hours from the time they sat down at the table before this group of three separated for the day's work, Phœbe and Mary going directly to their rooms, and Alice stopping only long enough to give her orders for the day.

They did not see one another until dinner time, as they had not chanced to meet at luncheon. The gayety of the morning had subsided, but the same cordial good will and common interest prevailed.

After dinner they adjourned to Alice's room, each taking with her the product of the day's labor. Phœbe opened the door softly, carrying her neat manuscript. She sat down beside Alice, and shyly and modestly read the poem she had just completed. Her low, appealing tone made adverse criticism impossible, and the listeners wept with her over the sad story of "The Lamp on the Prairie."

Then Alice went slowly to her desk, drew out some rumpled sheets, and sank back in her easy chair. In her sweet voice she read that wild, quaint ballad beginning

In the stormy waters of Galloway
My boat had been idle the livelong day,
Tossing and tumbling to and fro,
For the wind was high and the tide was low.

After this, silence fell on the group—the silence of perfect freedom, which is the very essence of true friendship. They spoke at intervals in low tones, of the past, the departed ones, whose memory was always fresh in their minds, and of their youthful hopes, disappointments and successes.

When Phœbe rose to leave the room she kissed her sister tenderly and repeated with deep feeling:

"So let my past stand, just as it stands,
And let me now, as I may, grow old;
I am what I am and my life for me
Is the best—or it had not been, I hold."

Alice died in February, 1871, and Phœbe the following July. So close were the ties that bound them, it seemed that the one who went first must draw the other to her.

Alice Cary was a woman beloved by all who knew her. She was tall and graceful; her beautiful dark eyes with their expression of tenderness attracted at first glance, and the lines of strength and firmness about the mouth inspired respect.

She loved children passionately, especially little girls, and often invited them to spend the

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day with her. One little company of them she had always in her room, a row of Alice Carys—photographs of children who had been named for her, and in whom she took a motherly interest. Her poem "My Little One," shows how she always carried in her heart the memory of her blue-eyed sister Lucy.

Phœbe also was very fond of children, but her favorites were boys. She made herself a child with them; they were her "jolly little comrades," her "dear little friends."

She had a keen sense of humor, and her ability to portray to others the funny sights she had always the eyes to see made her a very entertaining companion. She was called the wittiest woman in America, but wit is not of so tangible a nature that its fruits can be handed down to other generations. Phœbe Cary's wit flashed out and enlivened the people about her, but to us is left only the echo of the laughter she awakened.

These two sweet singers, whose songs will never grow old, were women of exceptionally pure lives and noble character. No stories or poems of theirs were more musical than their harmonious lives; their hearts embraced the whole universe in loving tenderness. To be useful and helpful, to feel that the world was better for their having lived—this was the moving power of their whole existence.

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